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ABSTRACT

"Readalong," a program employing a videotape format to teach vocabulary skills to early childhood learners, was tested in an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) setting by comparing primary and advanced ESL classes using the program with classes using only the conventional teaching materials. Students received a test prior to the initiation of the series and three tests at regular intervals during the course of the 30 programs. A covariance model was used to analyze the data, and results showed "Readalong" to be an effective tool to help ESL students. A questionnaire also showed teachers to be enthusiastic about the use of the program. This report discusses the research methodology and summarizes results. (EMH)

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by: Timothy Hodapp

The positive response with which Readalong has been received by teachers and educators has fostered ideas for its implementation in other instructional settings. One such possible setting is the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Program.

Over the past few years ESL programs have been initiated and expanded in many of Canada's school districts to accomodate the growing number of new Canadian children in attendance. However, while the necessity for proper ESL instruction to insure successful assimilation into the Canadian mosaic has been recognized, review of pertinent literature has indicated that few viable aids are available for the ESL teacher.

In order to test the effectiveness of Readalong in an ESL setting, an experiment was initiated. Two classes of primary ESL (Grade 2) students with a total of 21 students and two classes of advanced ESL (Grades 4 - 8) students with a total of 19 students formed the experimental group. Two primary classes (14 students) and one advanced class (15 students) from other schools were used as the control group.

Teachers of the experimental classes were provided with program tapes, teacher's guide, and videotape equipment. The tapes and video equipment were provided so that teachers could review, at their discretion elements of the program.

Students received a test prior to initiation of the series and three tests at regular intervals during the course of the 30 program series. Each test consisted of a set of program words and non-program words on flashcards. Students were individually asked to read each flashcard. While this was not an ideal method for determining gains in general improvement in language (a construct not easily tested in any manner), the method represented a test of one of the basic goals of Readalong and caused minimal classroom disruption. Each student received scores for the number of program words and non-program words read correctly and a score for the difference between the two scores.

A 2 x 2 (Grade x Condition) repeated measures analysis of covariance model was used to analyze the data. The difference scores at the three test periods were the dependent variables and the pre-test difference score was the covariate. Results showed significant Condition and Time effects. Thus, although difference scores decreased over time, Readalong was shown to be effective in helping ESL children learn to read English.

Questionnaires completed by the ESL teachers indicated that all of the students, including the older ones, enjoyed the program. They stated that Readalong helped improvement in comprehension and pronunciation of English in that the students could hear the words pronounced, see the words on the screen, and then see visual examples of the words.

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READALONG AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL AID FOR ESL PROGRAMS

EVALUATION REPORT

BY: Timothy Hodapp

(O.E.C.A. Project Research Branch Report Number 3C, 7pp, July 1976)

I. PURPOSE

Since 1966 approximately 120,000 children aged 14 years or younger from non-English speaking countries have been admitted to Canada as landed immigrants (Statistics Canada,1974, 1975). A substantial number of children born in this country of immigrant parents do not know English well, if at all, because the mother tongue of their parents is used extensively in the home (O'Bryan, K., Kuplowksa, O., Reitz, J., 1975).

To accomodate these children school boards have initiated and expanded English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs in their schools. These programs teach children regular academic subjects in an atmosphere designed to facilitate their transition from mother tongue to English. When an acceptable level of English competence has been achieved, the student is placed in a regular class.

Despite television's ability to effectively instruct in a variety of content areas, few attempts have been made to provide video aids for ESL teachers (Sherrington, 1973). Although developed to teach reading for English speaking primary students, the educators for Readalong considered the program as possibly useful for an ESL program for several reasons. Readalong is primarily a reading program and, because of the substantial transfer of reading skills in one language to reading skills in a new language, reading should begin early in ESL studies (Handscombe, 1975: Paulston & Bruder, 1976).

Readalong also introduces new words and provides numerous concrete examples of those words, a recognized requirement for effective instruction of a new language (Anisfeld, 1966: Titone, 1973: Harper, 1974: Handscombe, 1975). Other skills important to new language learners taught by Readalong are: speaking, listening, and writing. Also, cultural information is incidentally provided and this is a definite requirement for effective language comprehension (Nostrand, 1966).

Readalong's format permits the teacher with access to video equipment to stop and start the program for discussion of relevant segments.

The instructor can also review all or portions of the programs as needed. The flexibility of video is a requirement for media aids used in an ESL setting (Chaperlin, 1975). The guidance materials for Readalong provide teachers with a plethora of ideas for consolidating material introduced on the program, again a requirement for media aids used for ESL (Sherrington, 1973).

However well Readalong satisfies the requirements for an effective aid for ESL instruction, several possible drawbacks for its use in this setting arise. Since the program was developed for English-speaking children, it assumes a knowledge of English. Thus, the dialogue is at normal speed and may only be understood by children who have had several years of exposure to English. And, because the program includes puppets and animation designed to appeal to a primary audience, older children may feel that it is too juvenile for them and, thus, not attend to it.

Thus, this study was designed to determine if Readalong is effective in teaching reading and English language skills to new Canadian children.

II. METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The names of several schools who had ESL programs were obtained from the Metro Toronto Separate School Board Principals and ESL teachers from two schools randomly chosen from the group viewed samples of the program and the program support materials. The experimenter gave a brief presentation concerning the goals of the program and the purpose of the study. Agreement to participate in the study was obtained in both cases.

Several other schools were asked to formulate the control group. Their cooperation was also secured.

Two grade levels were employed in the study; primary, or Grade 2, and advanced, or Grades 4 - 8 Originally a Grade 1 class had been included, but these students were dropped from the study when it became apparent to the teachers that the program was just too difficult for them.

All students participating in the study had been in Canada for less than two years but more than three months. The ages and backgrounds of the children in each of the grade levels were similar.

The sample sizes for each of the grades in the experimental condition were: primary, 21 students; advanced, 19 students. The sample sizes for the grades of the control group were: primary, 14 students; advanced, 15 students.

Procedure

The Readalong series comprises 30 programs. In its use with standard English-speaking students, three programs are broadcast each week. The first two programs of each week introduce new material and the third is essentially a review of the week's material.

Since the students viewing the program in this study had little exposure to English, it was obvious that they would require more than one viewing of the program. Thus, each school in the experimental condition was provided with a cartridge playback unit and tapes of the program. Teachers, could, as they saw the need, start and stop or replay all or portions of a program. No restrictions were imposed on the teachers in this respect.

Teachers of experimental classes were provided preliminary copies of the guidance material. This package included: guidelines for classroom use and activity sheets describing the content of each program and suggestions for related activities. Again, no restrictions were imposed on the use of this material.

Students received a test prior to initiation of the series in the experimental classrooms and at regular intervals during the course of the series. Subjects were tested individually in a location away from noise or distraction, usually a quiet corner of the library or the staff room.

At each testing, students were presented with a list of 24 words printed individually on flashcards. Twelve were program words and twelve were non-program words. The order of the 24 words was randomized for each student. Each student was requested to read the words if he or she could, or indicate non-comprehension. If the child could not read a word after 15 seconds, the experimenter proceeded to the next word. After the testing session the student was returned to his or her classroom.

Having students read words from flashcards is not an appropriate method for determining gains in general language experience. However, this is not a construct which is well tested by any format. The method used represents a test of one of the basic goals of Readalong, i.e., providing a basic vocabulary on which to further expand language experience, which is also one of the goals of ESL (Paulston & Bruder, 1976). This method also minimizes disruption of classroom activities,

Word Lists

Subjects were tested four times: a pre-test and three evaluative testing sessions. The pre-test consisted of ten words chosen at random from all words introduced during the series and ten non-program words. The twelve program words used in each of the evaluative testing sessions were randomly selected from the words introduced in the Readalong programs since the last testing session. Each evaluative testing session also contained 12 non-program words.

The words used in the four non-program word lists were randomly selected from the Gaites-MacGinitie Test, Level 1, a test designed to determine the reading ability of primary level students. Thus, the non-program word lists are representative of words within the grasp of the average Grade 1 English-speaking student.

Since the control words were randomly selected from a single list, it can be assumed that the lists do not significantly differ in difficulty from one another. However, because the program words were arbitrarily chosen for inclusion in the program, it cannot be assumed that the lists do not differ significantly from one another or from any list of control words. All word lists are provided in Appendix A.

III. RESULTS

Each student received three scores for each of the evaluative testing sessions: the number of program words read correctly, the number of non-program words read correctly, and the difference between the number of program words and non-program words read correctly. The pre-test provided a measure of the reading ability of the students prior to the initiation of the experiment. This information was used as a covariate in the data analysis.

Analysis of the difference scores will provide the greatest information concerning the effectiveness of the program in that this measure controls for reading ability. That is, readers unaffected by the program should read both program and control words with the same facility, whether with ease or difficulty. Analysis of difference scores also controls for different levels of difficulty between the words lists, should such differences exist; i.e., if the program is ineffective but word lists are of different difficulty level, then the difference scores between control and experimental students should be equal.

Data was analyzed using the repeated measures analysis of covariance program from the Biomedical Computer Programs Package and appropriate procedures from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Significance level for rejection of the null hypotheses was $p = .01$.

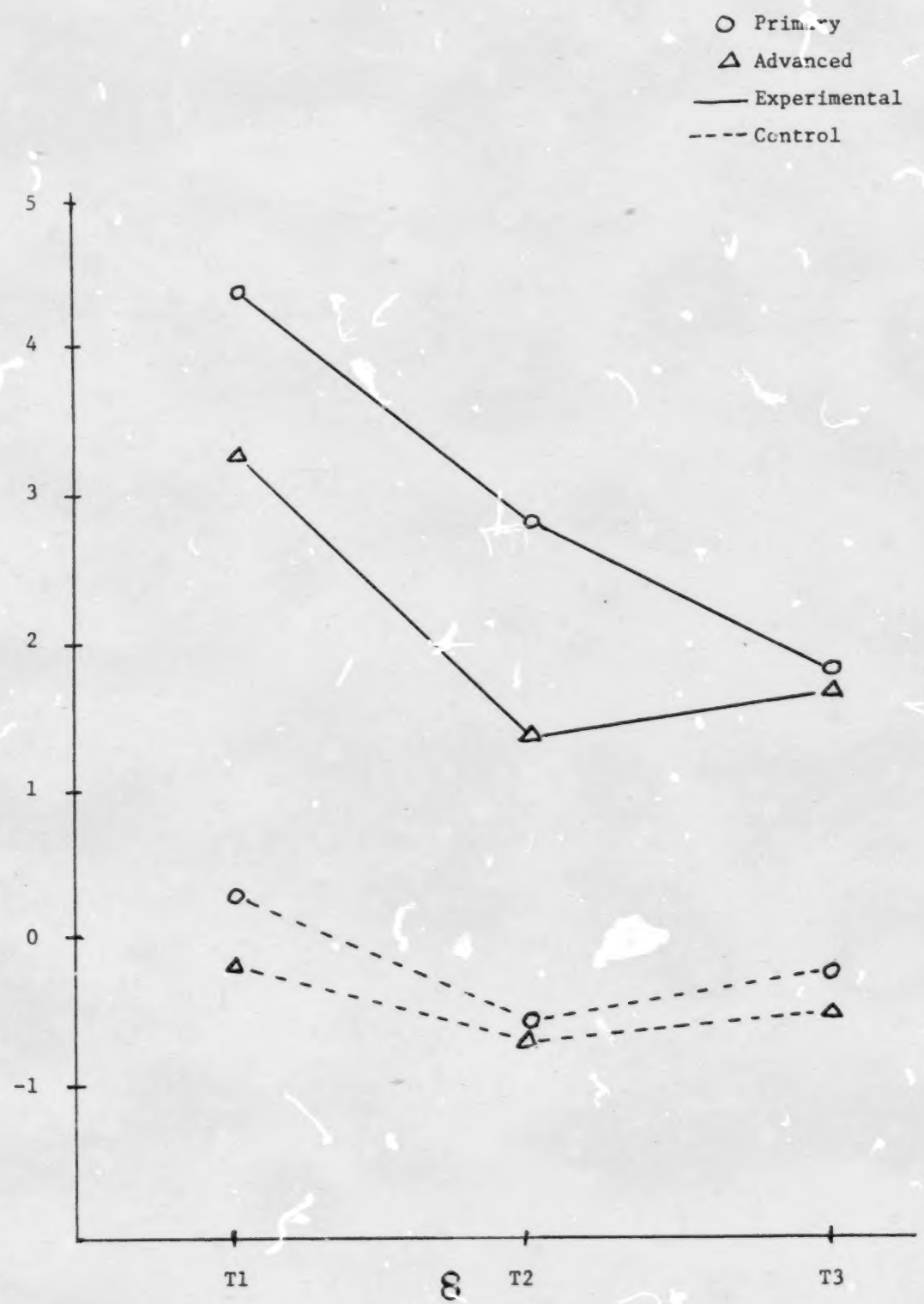
Figure 1 provides a graphic display of the mean difference scores for each experimental condition and grade level combination at each experimental testing session. See Tables 1-3 in Appendix B. A positive score indicates that more program words were read correctly than non-program words.

It can readily be seen that both experimental grades have considerably higher difference scores than their control counterparts. Analysis indicated a significant condition main effect between experimental and control students ($F(1,64) = 61.29$, $p < .0001$). The grade main effect was not significant ($F(1,64) = 1.38$, NS). The covariate was not significant and no significant interactions were found. A significant and time main effect will be discussed later.

This pattern was exhibited at each of the testing sessions for the condition main effect (T1: $F(1,64) = 27.49$. $p < .001$); T2: $F(1,64) = 32.19$, $p < .001$; T3: $F(1,64) = 6.9$, $p < .01$) and the grade main effect (T1: $F(1,64,) = 2.20$, NS; T2: $F(1,64) = 5.76$, NS; T3: $F(1,64) = .01$, NS). In each of these analyses the covariate was not significant and no interactions were significant.

Difference scores for the primary and advanced classes of the experimental condition appear to be substantially different at testing sessions 1 and 2. However, neither of these differences proved to be significant (T1: $t = 1.46$, NS; T2: $t = 2.17$, NS). All other

FIGURE 1



comparisons between grade levels within experimental conditions were also non-significant.

As mentioned above, a significant time main effect was found in analysis ($F(2,130) = 9.82$, $p < .0001$). A decrease in the difference scores for both grade levels of the experimental condition is evident. However, the difference scores for both grade levels of the control conditions are stable over time, as would be expected.

The cause for this decrease can be attributed to a decrease in the ability of the students of both conditions to read the program words. For the non-program words the time effect was not significant ($F(2,130) = .77$, NS) as was the time by condition interaction ($F(2,130) = .36$, NS) indicating that students in both conditions could read the non-program words with the same facility over the course of the series.

However, for the program words the time main effect was significant ($F(2,130) = 15.46$, $p < .0001$) while the time by condition interaction was not ($F(2,130) = 2.43$, NS). This indicates that students in both conditions were less able to read the words from the later programs than from the earlier programs. This is not a surprising result as abstract concept words are increasingly introduced through the course of the series. However, it should be recalled that even at testing session 3, the experimental students had significantly greater difference scores than the control students.

Teacher Questionnaire

The teachers of the experimental condition classes were asked to remark on their impression of the effectiveness of Readalong in their ESL program. Their remarks were combined with responses received from other ESL teachers who submitted unsolicited evaluations after having used Readalong in their ESL classes as it was broadcast on its regularly scheduled transmission.

Although the sample was small (5 responses total) and significance testing could not be performed, the opinions of the teachers regarding the value of Readalong were clear. According to these teachers, their students enjoyed the program and characters very much. They exhibited this enjoyment by participating actively in the program. Readalong helped the students develop comprehension and speaking skills as well as a basic English vocabulary. The program also increased motivation for related activities.

The teachers discerned no gaps in the progression of material development. The number of words introduced in each program and the amount of time spent on each word was considered sufficient. Generally, the teachers felt the amount of material covered during the thirty programs was also sufficient. The teachers believed that

a longer series would be useful. The guidance materials were also found to be helpful in formulating activities for their classes.

The only negative comments concerned the songs and some of the dialogue. The songs were too fast for the students to understand and the accents of the Explorer and Granny were too unusual for the students to comprehend.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this experiment indicate that Readalong is an effective aid for teachers of English-as-a-Second-Language. The fact that the program was developed for English-speaking students does not appear to have any significant inhibiting effect.

The relative difficulty of the students to learn the words introduced in the later programs proved to be the only problem. The fact that the control students also had similar problems with these words as opposed to words introduced in the initial programs, indicates that the words themselves are the problem and not the way that they are presented in the program.

This finding reinforces the original supposition that ESL teachers should use Readalong from videotapes which allows for review at will. Thus, the later programs could be covered more thoroughly than the earlier programs.

However, it should also be recalled that teachers who could only use the program via broadcast television also indicated that the program was very effective. Thus, while videotape is not the only effective format for Readalong in an ESL setting, it probably would be the best. Satisfaction by the teachers with the guidance material indicates that new materials need not be developed especially for ESL programs.

Thus, Readalong satisfies the requirements of ESL instruction for an effective and enjoyable video aid.

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WORD LISTS

Pre-Test Program Words	Test Session 1 Program Words	Test Session 2 Program Words	Test Session 3 Program Words
Push	Boy	Swim	Broken
There	Room	Hole	Elephants
Swim	Book	Thing	True
Bad	Push	Why	Large
Thing	House	Sad	Small
Grow	Ball	How	Flowers
Down	Kick	Would	Great
Noise	Read	Quick	Teacher
Apple	Play	When	Race
Book	Here	Safe	Story
	Rain	Dress	Noise
	There	Front	Shake

Non-Program Words	Non-Program Words	Non-Program Words	Non-Program Words
Soup	Egg	Soup	Again
Bear	Work	Four	Eye
Help	Fire	Made	Wolf
Train	Hard	Had	Sheet
Milk	Tree	Puppy	Bird
Prince	Pig	Oven	Not
All	Splash	Bell	Draw
Stick	Stand	Flag	Pair
Door	Grass	Warm	Help
Tree	Grow	Hall	Wood
	Ride	Hose	Star
	Stick	River	Prince

TABLE 1

MEANS OF DIFFERENCES

TEST PERIOD 1

Grade	Condition E	Condition C
Primary	4.43	0.36
Advanced	3.32	-.13

TABLE 2

MEANS OF DIFFERENCES

TEST PERIOD 2

Grade	Condition E	Condition C
Primary	2.81	-.50
Advanced	1.47	-.60

TABLE 3

MEANS OF DIFFERENCES

TEST PERIOD 3

Grade	Condition E	Condition C
Primary	1.81	-.21
Advanced	1.74	-.47